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AMERICAN IDEALISM IN THE WAR

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Victor Hugo's old republican, one of the great characters of fiction, as he sat dying, paused in his impassioned utterances and, with a strange, new calmness, said to his Bishop:

"Yes, the brutalities of progress are called revolutions but, when they are over, this fact is recognized: the human race has been chastised but it has advanced."

Thus he carried the last and innermost intrenchments of the Bishop who in turn replied:

"But Progress must believe in God;" and then these two great souls, high, fine conceptions of a master mind, met, touched and at last they were agreed. If this present tremendous process of mutation in the world's affairs may not be properly called a revolution, yet we must have the faith and vision to perceive that it is but one of those vast and violent stages of evolution through which the race moves on resistlessly toward better conditions and to higher stages of physical, moral and social development. We must realize that we are living in an unprecedented period of political and social nascency. We must believe that within the huge and fateful alembic of this war there are taking place elemental changes in the structure of our civilization which mark the everlasting finality of much which must no longer be in the established social orders of the world, and that at the last, there will come forth that new, more highly coöperative and efficient democracy which shall more closely approximate that ideal of government of which the statesmen and the seers of every age have dreamed and for which so many sacrifices, through all the centuries, by earth's devoted martyrs have been made.

First, pioneers in the vast isolations of the bleak shores and pathless wildernesses of a discovered continent; then colonies expanding over the silent wastes, hand touching hand; next a confederation, hands clasped in fellowship, mutually sacrificing, coöperating

for liberty; then a federation of sovereign states, with liberty achieved and secured, slowly cementing into a more nearly perfect union; and now, at last, the long awaited consummation of the plan, the true and final integration of these states into that mighty nation which, with her full found and invincible powers, now so valiantly puts on her armor and assumes this weighty responsibility for the welfare of the world; may this be our national evolution.

Scholars and members of these great academies, officials of states and nation, men in the armies, men and women in all our industries and at home, must catch a vision of this process and of this plan and strike strong, unceasing, shaping, fabricating blows in order that in these fires America may be welded into that new and more nearly perfect symmetry and unity which will assure to each and to all the utmost safety and the highest liberty. We must call not alone the army but the nation to this task. Let us away with the false doctrine that inefficiency means liberty. Avoidable sickness and illiteracy know not the boundaries of states and locally allowed they place the whole in peril. The bacilli, the cocci, the spirochetæ, the parasites of communicable disease have not yet generally profited by their courses in constitutional law nor do they make all of the fine distinctions of state and federal sovereignty. The hour has come for us to smite from the men of the nation the heavy burdening shackles of preventable illiteracy, injury and disease which have for too long bound them. Let us learn to think greatly and to act nationally as we now face permanent and uncomputed international responsibilities. It is now time for us to blend and merge our individualism into a great common, national purpose.

In America the new temple of liberty is not yet builded but it is building and it is for us, for each living American, an hour of opportunity and of destiny in which we all must rededicate ourselves unreserved to sacrifice, to toil and to unwearying service until the nobler and more lofty fane is fully complete.